

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG PROGRAMS**

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### **CALIFORNIANS JOIN TOGETHER IN TOWN HALL MEETINGS TO PREVENT UNDERAGE DRINKING**

CALIFORNIA —Town Hall Meetings will be held in 23 California counties as part of a nationwide effort to address the serious problem of underage drinking beginning this month.

At each of the meetings, representatives from the community including parents, youth, educators, substance abuse prevention programs, other health entities, justice/law enforcement, highway safety, alcohol control, local government, and businesses will make suggestions to prevent underage drinking.

"Educating our communities about ways to reduce underage drinking will help protect our youth," said Kathryn Jett, Director of the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. "We have seen too many tragedies involving underage drinking, and we must all do our part to prevent them."

While underage drinking continues to decline, public and policy administrators are taking every preventive measure to eradicate this serious problem. Each year, approximately 5,000 youths under the age of 21 die as a result of underage drinking in the United States.

According to the 2003-2004 Student Survey, almost half of 11<sup>th</sup> graders have been "high" on alcohol or drugs at least once, and the majority of students who do drink are heavy drinkers.

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) developed the Town Hall Campaign. SAMHSA has also produced "Reach Out Now Teach-Ins", which are school-based underage alcohol prevention campaigns. All of the parties involved anticipate that this national effort will bring communities together to learn more about and discuss the problem of underage drinking. These efforts will help local agencies that administer federal grant programs to combat this problem.

Representatives from the Attorney General's Office, the Departments of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Alcoholic Beverage Control, Education, the California Highway Patrol, the California National Guard, the California Friday Night Live Partnership and EMT Associates, Inc., comprise the California Underage Drinking Prevention Task Group.

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**DO YOUR PART TO HELP CALIFORNIA SAVE ENERGY**  
For energy saving tips, visit the Flex Your Power website at  
<http://www.flexyourpower.ca.gov>

For a complete list of contact information and communities participating in Town Hall Meetings, please log on to:

[http://www.adp.ca.gov/Prevention/townhall/prevention\\_search.shtml](http://www.adp.ca.gov/Prevention/townhall/prevention_search.shtml) or  
<http://www.safestate.org/documents/town%20hall%20meeting%20dates,%20times,%20and%20locations.pdf>

Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign Downloadable PSAs

<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhall/psa.aspx>

Start Talking Before They Start Drinking Campaign Downloadable Images

<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhall/logos.aspx>

### Impact of Alcohol Abuse on Youth

- **33% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders report having ridden in car driven by someone who has been drinking alcohol.** \*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1997. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Summary.– United States. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 47(SS-3): 1-89.
- **Among 12-17 year olds who are current drinkers, 31% have exhibited extreme levels of psychological distress and 39% have exhibited serious behavioral problems.** \*Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 1999. *The Relationship between Mental Health and Substance Abuse Among Adolescents*. Rockville, MD: SAMHSA.
- **Each day, three teens in the United States die from drinking and driving, and at least six more die from other alcohol-related causes.** \*The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth.
- **Teenage girls who binge drink are 63% more likely to become teen mothers.** \*The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth.
- **Boys are more likely than girls to begin drinking before age 13. \* The earlier underage drinking begins, the greater the risk for developing a serious alcohol-related problem, including addiction.** \*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. June 2000. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance United States, 1999. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 49(SS05): 1-96
- **Alcohol use in adolescents is a predictor of both sexual activity and unprotected sex. Teenage girls who drink are more likely to have sex and have it without a condom than girls who do not drink alcohol.** \*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. 1999. *Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System Summary*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service.
- **Four out of five teens (78.4%) in juvenile justice systems in this nation are under the influence of alcohol while committing their crimes, test positive for drugs, are arrested for an alcohol or drug offense, admit having substance abuse problems or share a combination of these characteristics.** \**Criminal Neglect: Substance Abuse, Juvenile Justice and The Children Left Behind*, The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, October 2004.